

City of Keene
New Hampshire

ENERGY & CLIMATE COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, October 6, 2021

8:00 AM

**2nd Floor Council Chambers,
City Hall**

Members Present:

Peter Hansel, Chair
Cary Gaunt, Vice Chair
Jake Pipp
Jude Nuru
Paul Roth
Zach Luse
Suzanne Butcher
Councilor Bryan Lake
Andrew Dey
Clair Oursler, Alternate
Hillary Ballantine, Alternate

Staff Present:

Will Schoefmann, GIS Technician

Members Not Present:

Ken Dooley
Councilor Raleigh Ormerod

1) Call to Order and Roll Call

Chair Hansel called the meeting to order at 8:00 AM and roll call was conducted.

2) Approval of Minutes – September 1, 2021 Meeting

Mr. Luse moved to accept the September 1 meeting minutes with revisions, Mr. Roth seconded, and the motion was passed by unanimous vote.

Revisions as follows: In the section for work group report-outs, under EV vehicles, in last paragraph change “ROY” to “ROI (return on investment).”

3) Keene Energy Week

Mr. Luse stated that Keene Energy Week will take place from October 18-24. The mayor will kick off the week by reading a proclamation about the City of Keene’s commitment to sustainability and clean energy at 10 AM at City Hall. He said on Tuesday they will hold a webinar focused on small businesses and energy efficiency projects with CDFA and SBDC. He will be highlighting Paragon’s success story working with CDFA and SBDC, along with another small business

success story. The event will be promoted statewide through Chambers, SBDC, CDFA and Goldman Sachs small business program. He stated that he will get a link out to everyone and asked for help distributing the link.

Mr. Luse stated they will be tabling at Railroad Square on Saturday to help spread awareness about all the sustainable energy projects going on in Keene and they also were approved for signage and a website with a logo. Chair Hansel asked if they have enough volunteers and Mr. Luse replied that there are openings for those who want to promote their work at the Railroad Square event.

Ms. Butcher stated that the Clean Energy Team is also doing the Solar Tour that day to show the public various solar installations in the City. She said the Monadnock Sustainability Hubb is also holding a virtual EV tour. Mr. Luse stated that both of those events are included on the promotional materials as well. He said the webinar is being held at 9 AM, the virtual solar tour will be ongoing all week and the Saturday event will be held from 9AM-3PM at Railroad Square. Mr. Schoefmann stated that he is helping the Clean Energy Team with inputting the solar stops on the Google map as it is easier to integrate into people's map applications. Mr. Luse encouraged groups to join or individuals who would like to help support the event. Mr. Roth asked if it is possible to input the location of the EV charging stations on the Google map and Mr. Schoefmann replied yes.

Chair Hansel asked Mr. Luse what the signage will look like. Mr. Luse replied that they will have signage up and down Railroad Square and Public Works will have electronic signs that point towards the website. Vice Chair Gaunt asked if the Keene Sentinel is carrying this story to let people know the event is happening. Mr. Luse said a letter to the editor may have already been sent but he will confirm that.

Ms. Gillard added that the solar tour is a walking tour for businesses and homes and will include thirty locations and the rest will be virtual. There will be signs for that tour. She said that Ms. April on the Clean Energy Team is working on a press release for the solar tour linking it to Energy Week events. She stated that the walking tour will take place on Saturday and the map will guide people and link them to sites. Each site has a write up about what motivated the installation. Ms. Butcher clarified that there are 15-20 walkable sites downtown and the remaining sites are further away. Ms. Gillard agreed that there are close to 20 sites within walking distance, and they have heard back from 12-13 of them and are awaiting response from the remaining sites.

4) Energy Plan Work Group Report-outs **A) Weatherization**

Mr. Luse stated that the group has mostly been working on Clean Energy Week, however, Eversource performed 40 metered account audits which have led to 11 projects, and they are expecting paperwork in the next couple of weeks from several more. He said that makes up about 10% on the list and about 5% that they expect will do energy efficiency projects. He said there was a need to get work done in this calendar year. Chair Hansel asked if they should do some publicity about business who have signed up and Mr. Luse replied that the Eversource contact wouldn't share the information. Ms. Butcher asked if they will not give out the list of the companies, could Eversource reach out to the companies themselves and allow them to publicize their projects. She said publicity is important because the audits are always being offered and it would be good to

create that awareness. Mr. Luse said he can ask the contact person at Eversource if that is a possibility. Chair Hansel asked who the contact person is, and Mr. Luse replied that his first name is Mark.

Ms. Gillard stated that the Clean Energy Team received a notice from Clean Energy NH about the amended HB549 bill that is projected to undermine or gut energy efficiency programs in NH. There is a public hearing next Tuesday, October 12 at 1 PM and she has outlined the talking points that the public can use to speak out in opposition to the bill.

B) Home Energy Labeling

Mr. Dey stated that the group met on September 16 to continue the work of the group. He said they are still in the beginning phase of gathering information focused on real estate professionals. They refined a list of potential contacts to a handful of individuals who they can reach out to begin a dialogue about the plans for the home energy labeling initiative. Ms. Butcher spoke to a couple of realtors, and one was very receptive, and they plan to invite her to the next working group meeting. Mr. Dey stated that they will continue the process of reaching out to realtors. He said that they had wanted to table an event at the Energy Week event, however, the work may be too premature to share with the public just yet.

Ms. Butcher stated that they have a two-page information sheet about the pilot project they are developing, and they can share that with the committee. She asked if there will be a table to promote the whole sustainability plan more broadly. She noted that that people are not fully aware about the 100% renewable energy plan. Chair Hansel said he is unsure if they have that information available, but he is hoping Ms. Brunner will as she will be back by that time. Mr. Schoefmann added that he updated a flyer for the Energy Plan to take people to the plan website. Mr. Pipp asked if they can get a printout of the sustainability plan made available for the tabling event so volunteers can easily reference any questions the public may have about the plan. Mr. Schoefmann replied that they can make a printed copy available.

C) Electric Vehicles

Mr. Lake stated that the group discussed what incentive programs are currently available for property owners to put in EV infrastructure. They also discussed what engaging in conversations with retail property owners on West Street would be interested in to begin constructing infrastructure for chargers. He said on the incentive side, the NH Energy Co-Op offers a slew of incentives that unfortunately do not operate in Cheshire County; however, at the federal level there is the Alternative Fuel Infrastructure tax credit that offers a credit for 30% of installation costs, up to \$1,000 for individuals and \$30K for businesses for installing EV infrastructure. He stated that another thing to keep an eye on is the Raised Grant program from the Department of Transportation, the deadline passed in July, but it is worth monitoring in case they renew the program or create a new one next year. Mr. Lake stated that another opportunity is the NH Electric Vehicle Supply Equipment grant program which is part of the VW settlement and there is \$3M available in NH for solicitation and targets specific corridors where there is not currently infrastructure. He said the Monadnock Sustainability Hub and the Keene Co-cop are already engaged in conversations with prospective vendors to utilize that money for infrastructure.

Chair Hansel asked if there are comments from committee members. He said they need to keep an eye on the VW settlement grant money to see if they can have funding allocated for Keene. Mr. Bruce Norlund added that this would be a good opportunity for automobile dealerships to show up to Energy Week. Chair Hansel said that they did discuss the possibility of performing a drive electric opportunity with dealerships, however, it did not pan out this year and perhaps they can target one or several of the car dealerships in the area for sponsorship of a drive electric event.

Ms. Gillard stated that the Monadnock Sustainability Hub is doing a virtual Drive Electric event the same week. She said it would be beneficial to link all the events. Ms. Butcher asked if the corridors mean that one charger on each corridor would be supported. Chair Hansel said that one of the advantages of Keene is that it is on both corridors, however, if it means there cannot be one in Keene and then another on the Route 101 corridor or another town along that route is unclear. Ms. Gillard said she heard that there can only be 5 chargers supported in each state and asked for clarification. Mr. Lake replied that on the RFP it states there cannot be public chargers installed within a 20-mile radius so that presents a challenge with installing stations in precise locations.

D) Community Solar

Mr. Nuru stated that in terms of the EV infrastructure, the community should be aware that the RFP was released last week, and public feedback is invited. He said that the Community Solar group met last month to discuss group net metering and they investigated some of those mechanisms. They invited an expert from Standard Power, Mr. Hayden; Standard Power provides third party energy supply to municipalities across the state. Mr. Hayden discussed the mechanisms surrounding group net metering. He explained that the solar system is developed up to 100 kw which is considered a small customer generator, which has the added benefit of having 100% supplier value and transmission value and quota versus any system that is developed above 100 kw which would only attract supplier value. He stated that the committee decided it would be useful to concentrate on developing several hundred kw across the city at multiple locations so the city can benefit from the higher energy value as it applies to smaller customer generators as well as economies of scale as the contractor would perform both at the same time and would reduce the labor costs.

Mr. Nuru said they also considered giving the power to Keene Housing, an affordable housing entity in the city that is on track to achieve carbon neutrality by 2035. He said they have done some solar installations already and the advantage of Keene Housing is that they have low to moderate income tenants and that will attract an additional value of 2.5 cents that can enhance energy value. He said they decided this would be the best avenue towards attracting the best energy value. Mr. Nuru stated that the group net metering is complex, therefore, it is important for the working group to commit to finding an appropriate site for the array and leave the connection and net metering issues to the experts. They concluded to continue monitoring legislation changes in the State. He stated that the smaller customer generator has the potential to increase to 500kw but there must be a legislation change involved.

Chair Hansel stated that to qualify for the 2.5 cent additional value for energy being produced by the array, a certain percentage of the output must be generated by low- and moderate-income

households that are certified by an agency. He said there are several agencies in Keene that can do this, for example, Southwest Community Services and Keene Housing. He said Keene Housing has a lot of experience doing this through their own solar arrays, therefore they are a logical model to use as the process is complicated. Chair Hansel stated that they have been concerned about connecting power from an array to qualifying households. Therefore, at the recommendation of Dan Weeks from Revision Energy, they should concentrate upon the siting and leave the mechanics of power development and allocation to the experts. The group decided to develop a solar resource inventory for the city, which could also apply to what is already available for solar resources, but also potential sites for up to 100kw facilities, or potential sites for any solar projects on the future. Mr. Nuru added that Keene Housing pays electric bills for their tenants which makes it easier for them to manage group net metering.

Guest Dr. Shedd stated that the Monadnock Sustainability Hub is in the process of applying for one of Antioch University's collaborative service initiatives that relates to solar siting and the application is due on Friday. The proposal includes the potential for mapping overlays of three phase powerlines and suitable sites for net metered solar at various scales at a regional scale. It would also include smart siting standards that are developing around the state and the country and there was a collaboration between AUNE and Southwest Region Planning Commission around Brownfields and this could tie into the City of Keene's efforts to contribute to this effort. She encouraged entities to continue to work together. Ms. Gillard stated that students at KSC conducted a capstone project around mapping out the roof mount and land solar potential for Keene. She said Mr. Tom Webler is on sabbatical right now but that may be useful to reference. Chair Hansel stated that they did review that study; it concentrated on a part of Keene between Court Street and Washington Street and used that triangle to make estimates about the rest of Keene. He said they will use that study is a resource.

Ms. Butcher noted that rather than doing a project that is 100% low and moderate income, perhaps they can do ten households that are through Keene Housing and ten other households in the neighborhood to reach beyond Keene Housing. She said this may complicate things further, but it is just a thought as there are households outside of Keene Housing that are currently interested. Chair Hansel thanked Ms. Butcher and said that the experts should help figure that threshold out. Mr. Nuru added that there are two approaches and from the perspective of power generation, it does not need to be 100% low and moderate income, as only 85% must be, which means that there are other households that can be included in the remaining 15%. He clarified that at least 12% of the benefits of on bill crediting must come from the low- and moderate-income households.

Mr. Roth signed out of the meeting.

5) EV Ready Code Updates Outreach Planning

Mr. Lake stated that given the feedback they have received so far, the best course of action is to compile recommendations for how new buildings can be built and have that information available and try to provide educational outreach on those guidelines. He said they can circle back in a year and determine what changes they should make on the recommendations. He stated that it's not only the EV ready guidelines, but also solar guidelines, so it would be helpful to collaborate with members of the solar ready working group to propose a full set of guidelines and provide that as

the informational recommendation. Chair Hansel asked for members comments or questions. Vice Chair Gaunt offered her help on the solar ready guidelines.

6) Community Power Program

Chair Hansel asked what the status of the Keene's Community Power application to the PUC is, as he was concerned when the PUC turned over the review of the application to the newly formed Energy Division. Mr. Schoefmann said he does not have an update and perhaps Ms. Brunner was the point of contact, and she will be back next week. He said he will put a note to himself to check in on that. Chair Hansel stated that he saw someone from the PUC, and she said that the review is with the Energy department which made him nervous, so he thinks it is best to follow up and put pressure on the powers that be to get an answer. Mr. Schoefmann said he can also loop him into the conversation.

Mr. Dey stated that he is serving on a community power committee in Walpole and it looks like they are one of the founding members of the Community Power Coalition of NH and they are joining with a dozen other communities to pursue community power. He said Keene may be taking its own path in parallel, but they will have an informational session in the next week or two to get information out to the community of Walpole. He also noted that there will be a local Energy Solutions conference this Friday in Concord that happens every year, and there will be a panel on community power at the conference that will include the top three community power representatives in the state- Mr. Henry Herndon of the Community Power Coalition, Mr. Bart Fromuth of Freedom Energy Logistics and Mr. Bob Hayden of Standard Power. Mr. Dey stated that he will not be able to attend but there are options for remote participation in the session as well and it could provide a good resource for the working group on community power. Chair Hansel said he will try to attend remotely if possible.

7) Legislative Updates

N/A

8) New Business

N/A

9) Next Meeting: Wednesday, November 3, 2021

10) Adjourn

There being no further business, Chair Hansel adjourned the meeting at 9:10 AM.

Respectfully submitted by,
Ayshah Kassamali-Fox, Minute Taker

Reviewed and edited by,
Mari Brunner and Will Schoefmann, Community Development staff